POETRY QUARTERLY

edited by Wrey Gardiner
and published by The Grey Walls Press
4 Vernon Place, London, W.C.1

6*s.* per annum or 1*s.* 7*d.* per single copy

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VOLUME 5, NO. 4, WINTER 1943

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THE
MOTIONLESS DANCER
PETER YATES

This young poet's first volume *The Expanding Mirror* received high praise: for its imagination and 'extreme poetic quality' (*Spectator*), its 'banked down internal fire' (*Poetry Quarterly*), its 'pressure of experience' (*Observer*). *The Motionless Dancer* has the same high quality, but the scope is greater and the vision more intense. 5s. net

CHATTO & WINDUS

EDITORIAL

In a recent lecture, Miss Edith Sitwell has remarked that we are due for another crisis in English poetry. To those for whom the reading of all good contemporary verse is a necessary part of life and not a haphazard caprice of the moment, this has been obvious for some years. No comment on such a statement is necessary to readers of this magazine which, together with POETRY (London) was printing in 1940 the poets everybody is getting to know today. What they may not know is that there are indications that 1944 is going to see a number of books likely to make it a year of historical importance in the history of our literature. There is the long-awaited book of David Gascoyne's collected poems; Nicholas Moore's selected poems, 'The Glass Tower'—both PL Books. 'The Five Rivers,' by Norman Nicholson, from Faber; Alex Comfort's 'Elegies,' from Routledge; and Ruthven Todd's new novel, 'The Lost Traveller' and Fred Marnau's 'The Wounds of the Apostles', both from GWP. Though the last is a translation (the translator, Ernst Sigler, is himself also a gifted and interesting poet worth watching) it may be considered important as pointing to the predominant influence of the German-writing peoples on the younger generation as against the French bias of their elders. Aragon may be cited, but will never have any impact on contemporary English writing, either in technique or ideas. Since 1940 England and France have drifted very far apart. All these books are of very great importance, and their publication in this fifth year of war, when one would expect the new generation to be still struggling in the dark—who had heard of Prufrock or cared tuppence about Joyce or Lawrence in 1918 ?—go to show the greatly increased vitality of English letters.

With this number POETRY QUARTERLY ends its fourth year under its present editor and publishers. From the half unreal days on the edge of a precipice in 1940 to the supreme year 1944 has been a long road, but our editorial policy remains much the same as it was in those dry and blank times when one published anything by the nearest poet to save him from insanity and despair. In spite of erroneous impressions to the contrary, we have never narrowed our appeal to one school, apocalyptic or other, but in 1940 we liked and had faith in the early work of such poets as Robert Greacen, Roy McFadden, Nicholas Moore, Patricia Ledward, Alex Comfort and others who all appeared in our first numbers. Today these poets are known to the genuine poetry-reading public, the small but unvarying number of people in one generation who care for good writing for its own sake. For these people it is unnecessary to be a riveter, a Russian, a drunken sailor, a Communist, or a Chinese admiral to find favour. Good reading is their only criterion.

Note Toward a Supreme Fiction

The romantic intoning, the declaimed clairvoyance
Are parts of apotheosis, appropriate
And of its nature, the idiom thereof.

They differ from reason's click-clack, its applied
Enflashings. But apotheosis is not
The origin of the major man. He comes,

Compact in invincible foils, from reason,
Lighted at midnight by the studious eye,
Swaddled in revery, the object of

The hum of thoughts evaded in the mind,
Hidden from other thoughts, he that reposes
On a breast forever precious for that touch,

For whom the good of April falls tenderly,
Falls down, the cock-birds calling at the time.
My dame, sing for this person accurate songs.

He is and maybe but oh! he is, he is,
This foundling of the infected past, so bright,
So moving in the manner of his hand.

Yet look not at his coloured eyes. Give him
No names. Dismiss him from your images.
The hot of him is purest in the heart.

ALEX COMFORT

From '*Lazarus and the Children*'

And Lazarus brings the autumn's foot of bone
the endless woods, hung with the levels of webs—
and the leaves follow him, like children begging.

There is a village full of children's faces
its gardens washed by mist, and on their fences
the swell of brown seed is breaking in the wind

the children fear the country's hollow voice
a dead wind streaming out of woods and hills
into the plain crossed by the roads of corn

their little faces fill the panes, watching
the hillside bushes open their small white flowers
Lazarus moving his crutches in the frost.

At night they hear the crutches thunder on,
multitudes going through the broken hedge
under the hostile deep bell of the dogs

whose wide shouts ring in the cave of the wind. At morning
the prints of crutches, frozen like blind eyes,
the cocks' fine voices on a sea of mist—

a cold light falls out of the parted clouds
and children see the beggars walk and gather
like gleaners treading the idle ways of the field.

RUTHVEN TODD

Elegy for Christmas 1943

Still now the ticking of my sullen heart,
Its metronome measure which recalls
The twice a thousand years or miles which part
Me from that birth beside the oxen's stalls,
And my time from the winter of the guiding star,
The three men plodding over half a world,
Seeking a faith which meant the end of fear;
A heaven whence no rebel saints were hurled.

Now in my London home, far distant from that place,
With the guilty hands knocking on the pane,
My uneasy mind works out the length of time and space,
The road the condemned will never walk again.
See in the dark the cross of light so far above,
The tracer stars that flicker and go out;
Dear heart, your fear treads heavy on your love,
That once you thought that you knew all about.

What was the message that you learned so long ago,
Under the untroubled sky among the sleeping hills?
Did you receive a chart to show you where to go,
A panacea for your own, or mankind's, ills?
Was there importance in that undistinguished scene,
With the stinking dung-heap by the stable door
And the rotten straw festering in the cattle's urine?
Why were you there, what had you travelled for?

A shepherd boy leaving his flock to the questing wolves
In search of something, what he did not know—
Certainly not the truth on which a world revolves—
Perhaps an event, the brightness of a firefly's glow—
Something of which to talk, when grey and gnarled and old,
When crouched beside the brazier, the young,
Glad of the smouldering charcoals in the dead night's cold,
Would tolerate the babbling of a senile tongue.

Yet surely at that time there was a something more,
Something beyond the inquisitiveness of a boy,
Greater than the momentary excitement of a rumour,
An incident to fondle like the latest toy?
What sent you stumbling, barefooted among the rocks,
Slipping on the cropped grass, wet with dew,
Ignoring the stone which cuts, the word which mocks,
What made you believe as if you knew?

'As if you knew'—as if you knew what?
More than an ordinary child lay whimpering in the byre,
A miracle was born, one whom a star begot?
Was it indeed for this you left the crackling fire?
Here, where the shelter fills the plane-fringed square
I ask these questions of myself in dreams,
Ask the boy I was, the humblest attendant there,
What were his wishes in these ancient times.

Supposing that boy had lived two thousand years,
And sat beside me at my fire tonight,
Would not the whole world be flooded with his tears,
And even the cruelest feel pity for his fright?
Not in one city but a thousand the Innocents now die,
And to the maimed the sorrowing mother shall devote
Her dreams that once had aimed, beyond the Himalayas, high,
Now fallen to depths beneath her heart, remote.

And in this world grown cruel beyond a Roman's skill,
Can we recall the hope there must have been
Even in the women weeping at the Cross upon the skull,
And the great reward the third day must have seen?
Can those to whom love matters still believe,
That a third day will wake the city turned a tomb,
That somewhere, somehow, a Saviour can survive
The unemotional impartiality of a bomb?

Dear heart, these questions that you ask tonight,
Listening to the crackle in the hollow sky,
I cannot answer, sharing as I do the plight
Of all men, for whom it is simplest to die
Lacking all dreams and faith and even any hope
That the harsh moment may finally reprove;
Only, my heart, I would nurse with all my scope
The unfortunate foundling whom I once called love.

NICHOLAS MOORE

A Stillness in Piccadilly

It is not the greatness of the times
We love, nor those men
Who stand against the times. It is not.
It is what we perceive to be the greatness

Of any time. It may happen when
The berries are on the holly, bright
In redness, or when the jay through
Wildwood rushes. It may be that scream.

It is something not of the tongues of men,
Yet is of their being. It
Dies on the lips of a loved woman,
On those rich and soft

Kisses. It is their torpor, their twist.
And again it is merely the look of
A dress, a gesture of wind. It is
Inanimate, animal. It is

The essence of what is. It is that,
Whether we be proud and upright men or
Scoundrels, whether we be
Mad of a boy's love or of a woman

Whose beauty seems the stillness of time.
It is still the thing—not what to do, but what
We would wish to do. There is no
Perversion here. It is simply this.

And that greatness is not a wickedness or
A cruelty, nor can it be spoken.
It is the one thing we have in common.
It is what makes, and always makes, our lives.

Evening on a Landscape

FOR PRISCILLA

The evening hangs like a dragon above
The solitary tree. The tree stands
Under the low smile of the somnolent cloud.
Here we are, aware of our own country.

It is the lifted bare arms of the tree,
As we remember the hollows of the land.
The grim dragon of the evening grins
Above our hopes, our fears, our loves.

O it is here we are, my dear,
At home in the hollows of our country.
Here is the solitary tree.
Here we know love's solemn and delicate landscape.

LOUIS ADEANE

Romance

Lie close, my love, within this hour,
The lamp is lit, the mind is still.
The blind is down, we cannot hear
The hoarding lean to tap the window sill.

The walls are sane, the room is square;
Lie safe, my love, on this soft bed.
The shadowed carpet, and the door
Hold down and hold away the dead.

Pretend we do not fear the dark
And lean on me your golden hair;
Turn close, my love, against my heart,
While history gathers on the stair.

JOHN SINGER

London Cemetery: November

Grief does not walk here, nor the sun, nor the blind.
There is nothing hateful here troubling the small wind,

There is nothing kind; a bomb debated death
Close by, a year ago; it is yesterday's breath,

Without meaning; the crater neatly enclosed; boards, rope;
as neatly the graves, without horror, without hope.

O. S. MARRON

Epitaph

His first wail pleased no proud parent
He was born unwanted of an indiscretion
In a slum in a smoke-slaked city.

He was fed on Glaxo free from the clinic
His father was a cynic and taught him to wipe
His nose on his sleeve and show no pity.

He wrote of his love on a lavatory door
And all his hope on a betting slip
He dreamed his dreams in a bug-bitten bed.

He died under pressing stone in the pit
His eyes staring up at the timbers.
The coal he had picked pillowed his head,
And no songs sung, no tears shed.

Vision

Three old men
Sitting in an inn,
Each had a wart upon his nose,
A beard upon his chin.

The first old man
Said I've swum canals on Mars
Catch him by the le. t leg
Throw him down the stars.

Another old man
In pale magenta socks
Had seen shepherds grazing
Guarded by their flocks.

The third old man
He must have been a liar,
Said he saw the face of Christ
Shining in the fire.

ERNST SIGLER

The Present Eye

Here most of all summer has lost its force
where crystal voices once showered on us
warmth of rococo nights and masquerade
of wig and candlelight. Often the vision laid
over my helpless eye too far, too far
receded into day and blithely tore
from a brain sullen with drill and marches
a splash of technicolour blue joining slim birches:
recalling names, hands, eyes and tears and youth to wait
on the crooked finger announcing hate.

Tagging at my shoulder, rifle sling;
weight on my head, helmet: I am listening;
sun, sweat on my face; grass for crawling in:
torture me, names, lest my hate be gone.
No longer for me the lonely, the lost, the quiet:
the present eye has its predestined target,
I am listening to the voices ahead,
my boots stamp out an uncharted road.

After the passage of a wasted age
its gestures loiter in each fruitladen branch.
Therefore bewail what it requires you to wreck:
in the split second between thump and crack,
fixing bayonets for the assault, here, now
is your mourning time. Later you cannot play
with your legends and heroes: the impact
will throw your nice dreams into solid fact.
The lyrical name, the rosecovered skull
lining your route warn sadly, sadly: boy, bewail.

Torture me, names, this summer without power
ignores you whom I had stored against war.
The exquisite voices have screamed and are silent,
once jubilant children become expert in raucous chant,
and the last hopeful Very light bursting explodes
its own myth: where shall I turn, where take sides
when even the airman will be only a symbol
of crepe, and his laughter moaning on the low stool?
Sing for me now, heroes, when this Augean summer
oppresses all love, while I wait for the splendid dreamers
to strengthen this day for those who gladly remember.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

To My Wife

Pensively awaits the summer hour,
Time curving like a moon about your cheek,
And grows the wild blooming of the flower
Under a smile. Rapture is the boon
And all your angels following windborne
Recall the flute sound of a day of birth,
Reveal the trumpet of a prophecy.

I give you five bright stars to tell your years,
Each promising a year and each a day.
Green moss shall be your charm and wild fruits
Shall grow like orchards in your rising land;
And underneath the acres of your joy
Flow eager little rivulets of birth,
And underneath the rivers of your blood
A spring of song is rising to your voice.

And now the frost is creeping down the hills,
Vapours an invocation to the sun,
Your hands are warming to a summer day,
Your heart leads onward to the promised hour.
For all these symbols crown your quiet head,
And all these words will come into your house,
And this is prophecy beyond the pen
But who shall measure it and who shall know?

BRENDA CHAMBERLAIN

From *White Water*

Voices speak from the Crevasse:

She trod so tirelessly the floor of ocean
And was so silent, so evasive in her light
Swift journey through deep caverns
That when she found by chance an upward way
No starfish barred her passage from the sea.

Thus, not sheer falling but vertical rising
With sap and splendour borne,
Through thin-crusted crevasse
Shot upward, nature-defiant, warm
Past the green hissing air
Of the frigid tunnel: lifeward ascending

Expelled from ice-cruddled gulfs, from glass-mouthed
nothingness,
She still, in two hair-bound shells of the horned whelk
Preserved through perfect spiral to the ultimate cone
Her sea-identity.

Waves damped her vision: snow-crested horses
Plunged their blue hooves across the whistling sand
Within her eyes; volcanic combs, red skerries
Of the east, were grit between her teeth.
Her lobster-fisher forefathers and unborn sons
Dropped listlessly from practised hands
Their baited baskets.
These things she rose with; all intact the past
Glowed in the body that the sea gave up.

O blood within her veins, be hot and lavish
Flood earth with imagery through the palpitant body
That she shall bear long days within the strength and
roundness
Of her belly. Draw from her with the lover's mystery
Of act and spirit fused, the perfect child.

DEREK STANFORD

The End and the Beginning

FOR G. P.

On such a night . . .
the sea-wind speaking peace,
hinting at Spring across the barricades
of sodden snow in the white invaded streets . . .
on such a night to have relinquished love.

Not in those days worn even by the light
of sky continuous as the unchanging dark . . .
walking one felt the alien vision press
with blank persistence through the burrows of bone.
purging the complex channel-ways of blood,
dissolving the disc of personality . . .
not during that hypnotic sleep of snow,
but when the forward-feelers of the Spring
had finger-tipped the slow, uncurling Mind,
then . . . then, to feel the warming image gone.

Winds that betokened daffodils,
gave signal to the waiting snowdrop;
called out the heart to deeper festivals,
must blow now to a bleak objective beauty.

Seal up the fountains!
a spirit sits apart,
unfriended as a shadow on the stair
and foreign as a winter-wasted cobweb.
Violets are in the earth
but a face is turned
away to where . . . outside, black horses wait
to carry off this being who must learn
to ride beyond the screen of old horizons.

MARK HOLLOWAY

The Quick and the Dead

What shall it profit you and me
To learn the sun's candlepower
Or the speed of light? What are scientists
But human fools when lightning slays a tree
And lays it at their yokel feet, O where
Is the sun's beat in their cold-fingered look?

In frigid observatories astronomers
Set down the stars and docket every comet
In a book. This spidery symbol
On the fly-walked page is Venus
Caught to earth and laid by a clerk's hand
On this white sheet, colder than death.

Science has shown me like Mephistopheles
To Faust, pleasures which turn to dust
It has shown me a robot's world.
Along its railroad of reason I have found
The lust in the dark, the lost hunger
And the ineffective visions of the blind.

While magicians hide the secret of beauty
In a mathematical tag, our hearts
Like wounded birds, failing and falling
Drop to a slow death. Let us find
Our own sun with the naked eye
And spend life's hour on his golden sands.

Let us give Venus up to eternity
That we may know those visions in the sky
As sea knows moon, untutored
And unquestioning, thus to touch time again
Through a thousand purgatorial years
And spin our five senses into the web of stars.

WREY GARDINER

XII *

Over the dancing autumn lie the leaves,
Frozen cascade of fire to the feet of my unalterable loves.

Time will turn again and the year know
The infinite wisdom of colour, vegetable slow.

We cannot mar on all the round of the world
This shadow cast by what internal shape of the unsoiled

Image thrown by the unknowable upon the screen
Which is the real, this ambiguous symbol of the seen.

Still seems no meaning as the soundless fall of leaf
Lying like laughter on the lips of life.

Love is the light I saw, love is the hand
Upon your breast, the eye clear as the mind.

The ancient quiet of this autumn morning
Fine as the bright leaves, careless of winter's bitter ending

Is twisted about the heart like a scarf of gold,
Triumph of treasure that cannot be sold,

Or spoiled by the passing hand of man
Who is but echo of the wandering sun.

Life is too strong for all our mingled sadness;
Like wild flower beauty in the ruins of our madness

It grows on blackened hearthstones of the old world burning.
Love is this blood, the harvest of our hope returning.

The light of days whose passage is our history,
The sound of many waters in your memory.

*Part XII of a longer work to be published shortly.

GEOFFREY GRANGE RUMBLE

Poem for Denis Botterill

What do they say of him now, who covered
The whole world with his confident blood,
Whose suffering words were like knives
And clean and quick to open
The poisoned wounds of his world;
What do they say of him now?

The flowers of his finger-tips drift like silent
Children through the hard walls of his
Afternoon and the wind penetrates
The gentle skeleton of his dream.

His pockets are full of shadows
And the tongues of his letters rage
Like mountains of absinth, angels and anemones
Hold eagles to his beautiful ears.

Words worn by the moon are houses
For violins and broken swords and the tears
Of his friends. He would have known in his time
Had they let him be with the snows
And the nightingales of his pain.

He who saw truth and was not afraid
But ashamed and would have held death
In his swift white hands for us all;
What do they say of him now?

ROSS NICHOLS

Orcus

The river under the trees passes into the shadows
from the apparent, bearing on its silent water
the barge that carries the emblems of death and life
fallen leaf crossed knives, ringed ankh and the
wide seed winging.

In darkness descends to fields of the lotos
Nilus, where the ripple breaks dimly and slow are the
oarsmen
phantasmal; the fircone and seeds trodden by
the brown shades
minimal, the life-spark in ember and the
death-flower's stillness.

The autumn stream with its leafage choked to the brim-reeds
moles through the roots of the steep white hillside of beauty;
sun lowers, and the rain's train sweeps over earth without
ceasing
as brown fire falls from the wind-harried forest.

Under the trees the river passes on into shadow
bearing the barge with emblems of life and of death.

KENNETH GEE

The Quest

Often, as children, we had heard
Tales of the sea told by old, grey men
Whose cheeks were maps of weather that had gone
As far down time as drowned hulls under water
They spoke of sadly and in memory called over,
Saying their names as music for a dirge:
Sunda, Arcturus, lost to all stars and shores
In untamed sound or in the fogbound surge
Far north where no keel ever rode before.
We listened to their wild geography; night fires

And candles burned to life their gestures;
Midwinter wind filled out their words to truth.
Gales across the bay would rock the buoy
That rang to tell the dark reef's trap of teeth
The sea snarled over but would never wear away.
We made many a voyage down their memories' tracks,
Sailed ocean's acres in the wake of tales
That sang of golden islands and of weed-sown calms,
Or wrecks under the sleeping wave reflecting
Only innocence in summer swells.

Our blood bore echoes of strange tides that flowed
Wide from our shores, since we were born;
We heard their sway, watching the nearer flood
Idly at high sun saunter, or through winter's narrows
Pour loud sea anger on beaches long forlorn.
We'd seen tall masts make landfall months from leaving,
The bay greet sailors with a spring morning's music
That melted a sea-year's iron to fire in their veins.
And there were names: these had known no returning
Prow break spray so gaily under a homing sun;
Gulfs had been too wild to cross,
There was loss and whirlwind under other stars.
We dreamed of journeys as our way of living,
And our hearts' longing leaped with tilting spars.

So, when it was time to go, although there was grief
At leaving hearths and old men's stories
And women who would never weep, but sad,
Stood between tides that mourned more frequently the dead,—
We left the bay lightly and steered for unknown furrows
Away from the black soil of the rainy spring,
Following paths our fathers had sailed down
So many years ago, the first seafarers.
Spring was our weather. Wind and tide set fair,
And we weighed anchor, the flukes dead arrows to the quay
That would lie months at wait for our return;
Heart gave no hastening feathers to that homeward iron,
The voyage was out, the farthest rim to turn.
Swiftly as following birds we fled,
Down the blue slipway, borne on waves' lift
And wind that showed the prow a curving flood
As easy as a woodland lane at home.

The pulse sang to the leaping timbers' tune,
And from the mast the flag of hope broke out
Gay as the dolphins playing in the foam.

Only a few weeks out the wind blew sour through shrouds,
The sky hung darkly as an old barn's rafters.
The waste was birdless now, and evening west was red
Each time the sun showed wounds among the clouds.
Signs of wrecks came by and spoke of rocks;
From deep sea ghosts of hands raised lost appeals
Haunting the unreflecting sea
That storms had broken in a million fragments
Blind to pity and to memory.
We lived the terror of the old men's tales
And thought ourselves a legend for tomorrow.
One of our brothers we buried with a bell of waters
And gale to wind him to his churchless ground.
Alone, each man faced out his night of weather,
Learned twisting currents charts would never show
And heard within his mind dark music sound
Buoy-bells of danger that he still would follow.

We were the keel and compass that drove on,
Our hearts gave stars to steer by we had never known
In truth or fable. Our eagerness of leaving
Left in its wake of loss a world to conquer
Deeper than sea's dominion and deeper than calms
Sun burned over in a year of noon.
Time could not measure this world nor fathom sound
Solitude we had not guessed at leaving,
From the greybeards' evening round
Of words where wastes of water were a bowl of blue;
Magic they'd given to months without meeting sail,
Was only a cloth of words to blind, and never true
For deeps and spaces passed on our lonely way,
Never hinted in the fireside tale.

Words had no skill to tell the way they'd gone,
The way they knew that we would come,
Where seven seas were less to know and fear
Than mind whose shifting, troubled maps explore

Sound and shore farther than any keel
Ever swayed over or morning prow saluted.
The polarised arrows of the heart
Drove us to seek the impossible pearl and coral
Or bird of wonder none had seen before.
This will to search had been bequeathed
Through veins alive to centuries of seawind,
And drove us still; danger or a death were only
Sails that gave the ship a bird's wing
To round a far south cape or find
Through narrow straits the island that would sing,
With stealing surf, thought of our hearths away.
The ship's tough oak grew fibres in our bones,
And we stood tall and proudly as our masts to greet
Tempest and timeless calm we would outdare.
We were the messengers, we were the hunted, too,
With all the creatures of sea's roots and sway.

Landfall at last. Our hull, hoary with weather,
Showed in the bay a shade of our journey's truth
We would fail to uncover here, as the old had failed.
The anchor settled in the sand. Our ship
Was almost a legend already, our voyage a tale,
The winter-shriven sails no more than ghosts;
Though we forever would hear seas roar
That buried in their anger men we'd loved,
Far from this shore.
It was a wonder to see again
Quayside and long-remembered houses
(Though time had wasted many signs we looked for),
And enter over the old, worn childhood threshold
Where all our thought of going had been born,
And to see the children playing once again.
Certainly we had discovered: what could we tell,
Give them and their mothers, more than storm or story?
Nothing nearer to truth than a shell
Whose windings held echoes that would wander and wake
As much of mystery as we had mastered.
This we gave to children, a gift to take,
To hear and handle, to keep by them in sleep;
For they would follow in their time such intricate ways
And find the convolutions of the heart as deep.

REVIEWS

GEOFFREY GRIGSON, *Under the Cliff and Other Poems* (Routledge, 5s. net); ARCHIE LAMONT, *Patria Deserta* (Oliver & Boyd, Ltd., 5s. net).

Reading the verse of Geoffrey Grigson we may be inclined to envisage his mind as a well-handled, well-timed Leica camera; his poetry being characterized by a photographic cleanness and clearness. It has perhaps, as well, that two-dimension look, the appearance of an art which is all surface.

Speaking in terms of literary comparison, we can say that Grigson is an Imagist who has studied the technique of Socialist Realism. For whereas the Imagists of the '20's wrote in a kind of picture-language where A stood for ass and B for bull as shown on the child's alphabetical bricks—a symbol as well as a picture or an image—Grigson records an ass or a bull and the animal exists there in its own right, instead of standing as an indirect statement of the poet's emotion, or, in T. S. Eliot's terms, as the emotion's 'objective correlative'.

In a previous volume of verse, 'Several Observations,' a certain exception might have been taken to occasional poems which seemed to present little more than a series of disconnected detailization. A certain tendency to collect optical facts and string them together irrespective of relation or without a mind to the poetic sum total resulted in kind of miscellaneous reportage. The remnants of this poetic stock are rarely observed in this present book, but the following lines exhibit the traits of a formula for the most part discarded:

> '*And a black engine on the bridge, named*
> *As a Princess, smoking. Rusty*
> *Galvanized over the coffin yard,*
> *A man passing with leeks.*'

For the most part these poems have a fine serenity after the fashion of Chinese verse; a background of clear thin breathing air against which the objects selected stand out with the scissored precision of college shapes.

'*Glass, did you know, is green*
In a bombed city,
Brushed into piles by the pavement edge, or
Wind tinkles the glass.
Windows flap, and stone pineapples
Are broken, on the high, calcined,
Inaccessible ledge.'

Nor is the eye always a stationary lens. In a poem 'October (In Kent, by the sea)' it goes on a journey down the line of a lifetime; the report has outline, terseness, and speed.

'*I lived in the broken house*
Over the moat and passed
The cricket willows
By the scarlet dahlias—

Was buried in the church
Among the sugar beet;
The heraldic foliage
And the gryphon head

On the black slab,
And the Latin and the date
And hope of Heaven,
Shut me in, when

I was dead. . . .'

Mr. Grigson, as his introductory essay to his anthology 'The Romantics' showed, has a nice sense of period; recognizes the local colour of the various changing decades. These historical fashions he sometimes revives as when, for example:

'*My familiars visit the romantic caves,*
The 1830 *mansions, and the stuccoed lion,*
Dive into the stump-speckled valley of Hafod
Read Rogers on the robin, under the weed-surrounded urn.'

There are also nine translations from Rilke and Hölderlin, of which the former ones in their smoothness, their continuity and naturalness are probably better than the conscientious Leishman, while the latter lack a certain lyrical strain which David Gascoigne sometimes gave them.

In conclusion, we may say that Mr. Grigson, who did as much bad as he did good through his editorship of the magazine 'New Verse', through his poetry seldom fails to please. Sometimes it

may be the merest titillation analagous to the enjoyment one gets from seeing a hundred words inscribed on a grain of rice or from quizzing the intricate craft of the watch-repairer. Mr. Grigson, at his best, is the poet of the little 'hard facts' of the eye, of 'small, hard, dry things', as T. E. Hulme prescribed.

The trouble with Milton, his recent critics have told us, is that for the purposes of verse he invariably perceived life through a widow's veil of Latinity. The trouble with Mr. Archie Lamont is that he views life through the closed shutter of a cliche, the academic-pedantic-antiquarian cliche, whose equivalent in the plastic arts is water-colour sketches of vicarage characters. Milton offered the compensation of a strong though unsubtle acoustic sense, hence his powerful but muzzying grandiloquence. Mr. Lamont offers no compensation in the way of sound outside banal euphonies:

> '*Dryades, nymphs of the woodland,*
> *Whither and whither away?*
> *O Aristaeus, the son of*
> *Apollo, lord of the day,*' etc.,

and so he continues, withering away into such hack-realism as the following:

> '*The farm-wive's washing is drying*
> *From the line, where the tails have been pinned,*
> *The sleeves of the night-shirts are flying,*
> *They clatter and crack in the wind.*'

Mr. Lamont is a countryman of Mr. Drinan and William Montgomerie, and it is even possible that his patriotism is of the highest order. However, when he plucks the harp on paper he proves himself to be the typical somewhat 'romantic' rhyming Philistine:

> '*We gave our sons as builders*
> *To nations West and East,*
> *O, may it not be said of us*
> *That we loved Scotland least.*'

Language for some people is a kind of protection, a torpedo-net against the impact of experience. Mr. Lamont writes his best poem after an air-raid in a large town. Perhaps the violence of the occasion broke down the fences of verbal habits. At least, the structure and syntax is fresher; in place of not being able to see 'the thing' for words:

'I have seen Birmingham
A beast
In a dirty lair
When the bombs ceased
Stemming red wounds
That burned her flesh
Till it burst;
A giddy mesh
Of rafters like sprouting bones
Of an ichtyosaur
In a trench
Watching the war
With empty ribs and eyes.'

The little book comes addressed to us from the precincts of Birmingham University. Judging, however, from the last quotation, the best place for Mr. Lamont as a poet might well be in the A.R.P.

DEREK STANFORD

Poems of Hölderlin, translated with an introduction by Michael Hamburger (Nicholson & Watson, a PL Book, 6s.); *Some Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, translated by Frederic Prokosch (New Directions, Norfolk, Connecticut).

The renaissance of German poetry which begun with Christian Guenther and brought forth Klopstock, Hoelty, Goethe and the other important poets, was nearest to the divine in the work of Friedrich Hölderlin. The fate of that promethean poet was hard and full of inmost concussions. And all the more since his figure and suffering were surrounded by immeasurable silence. Now still, a hundred years after his death, there is a strange dignity and nobility about his vanished appearance. But what was the meaning of Hölderlin's madness? What explanation shall we accept? To us it seems perhaps understood too easily that Hölderlin up to a certain degree in the beginning might have willingly surrendered to those bewildered fits. His angry sadness about all the insufficiencies which he came across determined probably the devoted politeness, with which he used to keep away intruders. But even his open submissiveness had greatness. He knelt and bowed, but was never servile. Even when calling a

rogue 'Your Majesty' and behaving like a servant with fool's cap and bells, he still remained wise—and the rogue remained a rogue.

Was Hölderlin wise? Did he get further than the enigmatic Goethe? 'The ground and basis, upon which all our knowledge rests,' wrote Schopenhauer, 'is the inexplicable. To this leads therefore every explanation . . . as in the ocean the lead finds the ground once in greater, once in lesser depth.' Did Hölderlin reach deeper than Goethe; Beethoven deeper than Bach? Had they reached those depths, where the storm of the eternal beats the brain with madness, the ear with deafness? Or was it that Bach and Goethe were of a happier and stronger disposition and were able to return from those bounds undistracted?

Poor Hölderlin—into his name already were woven both 'Höll' (hell) and 'hold' (grace)! And graceful was the way he carried his burden on earth.

Without going into the details of his life, or discussing the early poems and the great hymns—this has been done by Mr. Hamburger in the introduction to his translations—I should only like to mention Hölderlin's last miraculously wise and beautiful poems. As in those first days, when he was still under Schiller's influence, he turns again to rhyme. With highest wisdom to simplest order. One often wonders how it was possible that he would remember measure and form, remember even to write his thoughts down on paper, for what he created was no longer a mere poem, it was part of nature already, neither happy nor unhappy, neither artistic nor unhewn, only comforting as the divine presence is in the landscape:

'*Die Linien des Lebens sind verschieden,*
Wie Wege sind, und wie der Berge Grenzen,
Was hier wir sind, kann dort ein Gott ergänzen,
Mit Harmonien und ewigem Lohn und Frieden.'

Mr. Michael Hamburger understood the poet well enough to include some of those last poems in his book, as he altogether proved great competence in choosing and translating from Hölderlin's work. In order to appreciate his translations fully it is advisable to compare them with Mr. Frederic Prokosch's unsuccessful attempts. But it is to be appreciated that both translators give the original text on the opposite page. Mr. Hamburger often approaches the German text remarkably well. Thus in 'Patmos':

'*Near is*
The God, and hard to grasp.'

Hölderlin's text:

'*Nah ist*
Und schwer zu fassen der Gott.'

While Mr. Prokosch says:

'*Near, near and*
Difficult to grasp is the Almighty.'

Why stutter: 'near, near'? And, as Mr. Prokosch ought to know, for Hölderlin there was an important difference between God and Almighty. One wonders who Mr. Prokosch's translations were meant for. For imbeciles? Suburban Sunday Schools? It would have been better if he had published the fifteen poems in the original, had used a decent dictionary, and had put the required words in an appendix at the end of the pamphlet.

Mr. Hamburger's book has a greater choice but does not include Hölderlin's early poems. He begins his selection with four lines, written in 1789, in which the latest Hölderlin is to be found already. The translator then ventures the high ridges of Hölderlin's poetry, 'Hyperion's Song of Fate,' 'Menon's Lament for Diotima,' 'Bread and Wine,' 'The Middle of Life'. . . . Not always with so much success as in the first lines of 'Patmos', but always rendering a correct interpretation. I ought to add that those interested in Hölderlin will find very valuable the introduction Mr. Hamburger wrote to his translations. It shows penetrating insight and understanding, and brings Hölderlin and his work vividly to our minds.

FRED MARNAU

KENNETH PATCHEN, *The Teeth of the Lion;* MARK VAN DOREN, *Our Lady Peace;* JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN, *The Lincoln Lyrics* (New Directions, 50c. each); DELMORE SCHWARTZ, *Genesis* (New Directions, $3.00); DILYS BENNETT LAING, *Another England* (Duell Sloan Pearce Inc., $2.00); B. H. BRONSON, *That Immortal Garland* (Faber, 8s. 6d.).

Work that reaches us now from America is almost as interesting as the messages smuggled out of Occupied Europe. Hostile countries suppress but do not modify; work which gets through to the outside world is simple in that it is genuine. But façades are being set up in a deliberate

attempt to prevent the spontaneous exchange of ideas between British and American writing. and to substitute approved work —Ministries of Propaganda and War Writers' Boards who exist to invest inarticulate peoples with voices that are not their own, squeal and bellow in every imaginable key of insincerity. Through the subsidised racket one can hear the voices of writers who wish to maintain their integrity—one must scrutinize what they say with care, as one looks for significant marks on a letter that has come out of occupied territory. The position of American writers is doubly difficult because they retain so large a part of the Whitmanesque tradition of public-spirit, of national interpretation, in very sharp contrast to the conception of artistic personalism in England. The writer in America who refuses to become a hired collaborationist must dress up his comment in a cynical cryptogram or cover it by an assumption of eccentricity as much to protect it from himself as from the windbags and fatbottoms.

I do not know of anything that brings more intellectual hope and comfort here than the receiving, among the wild and mendacious racket of the salesmen, of voices which speak for intelligence, culture and integrity. The fatbottoms haven't it all their own way. I hope that the authors realize how welcome their work is to us.

Of the three pamphlets, Brinnin and Van Doren leave no mark on re-reading. Van Doren's war poems are shallow, unrelated to any feature of the war except its most superficial aspirations, neat in the manner of Macneice but without Macneice's underlying cynical insight. Brinnin struggles hard with a contemporary myth based on the life of Lincoln, is very monotonous, very competent, and without any permanent emotional effect. Compared with these two, Patchen's furious, untidy, and completely unformed lyrics have an emotional impact which is sometimes physically breathtaking. His appearance here is that of a bull at a prizegiving. He has a consciousness of suffering which is so intense as to be almost hysterical, a vein of invective which is both technically excellent and capable of demolishing anything, and a flaming sincerity that scatters the Good Little Boys like a tornado:

> '*Because you are sick with the dirt of your money*
> *because you are pigs rooting in the swill of your war.*'

Patchen's rage and mortification at society, at the deception of his own people, is comparable with the rage and mortification of English poets over Spain. He has many of the qualities of Lawrence without Lawrence's psychological patterns—more still perhaps of

the belief in life which Lawrence professed. He fumbles and convinces where the nice little lyrics about Lincoln blow away like waste paper. In this pamphlet there is a terrifying invention, 'The Reason for Skylarks':

> '*It was nearly morning when the giant*
> *Reached the tree of children.*
> *Their faces shone like white apples*
> *On the cold dark branches*
> *And their dresses and little coats*
> *Made sodden gestures in the wind. . . .*'

This ranks as the best modern American poem I have seen. There are some satires owing a little to Cummings, and a dedicatory love lyric that is excellent of its kind. Behind it all is the song he puts in the mouths of the Angels, a formless dogged refrain:

> '*to hell with blood and hate and war . . .*'

Patchen is speaking a language that we understand. We are coming to believe with him that the only remaining defence of individual freedom is in individual disobedience, and disobedience is the reiterated subject of his writing. Work of this kind is as gratifying to English writers as the tapping of buried miners to a rescue party. It shows that life is still there, for all the McLeishes and Millays. I hope our tapping comes through as clearly in New York.

Schwartz's poetic novel requires to be reviewed with care and without prejudice, and the publishers were justified in saying so on the jacket. Schwartz's poetic talent is hardly in question, and innumerable short passages of fine poetry are scattered in this book. It seems to me that an experimental form needs to be justified not by its success as experiment, but as an organic necessity, rising from the subject. If I say that I do not see why this novel (a moving and sensitive picture of childhood) should not have gone into prose, I am not denying the author's right to be reviewed *for what he wrote* rather than what he did not write. That the work should be at all tolerable at such length is a tribute to Schwartz, but at a fourth reading the lyric form of the chorus passages seems to be detached from the whole conception, and it is the *parts* that one recalls. It would be better as a pure picture of experience without a host of semi-technical assertions drawn from psychology. I am prejudiced in favour of lyric and against narrative, and it is the lyric passages that one remembers. Schwartz voluntarily draws attention to the fact that he is influenced by Wordsworth; he has very much in common with 'The Excursion', down

even to the didactic slant, the violent obtrusion of a theory (psychological and half-understood this time) and the deliberate flattening of diction:

'Two maiden sisters, gentle and genteel . . .'

Fortunately it is not always overdone. As experiment the book does make its case. As poetry it is unequal but generally sensitive.

Miss Bennett Laing's four best poems appeared some time ago in 'Phœnix'. I had a good deal of difficulty in deciding if the title poem of this book were an elaborate satire or not:

'The miner, digger of coal and dividends
yawned, scrubbed his body at a pump
wondered mutely at his dusty life
and cried on the right occasions, The King,
God Bless Him. . . .'

Another England is Miniverian comedy of an almost incredible solemnity. The group of 'Phœnix' poems are a different matter, 'Nunc Dimittis' being a considerable lyric. Miss Laing is one of the multitude whose highest readings only are above threshold.

The Faber Anthology is the collaborationist façade seen from behind. It was collected in the States as a non-profit-making venture to sell the English Heritage. Living collaborationists have only themselves to blame, but Bronson's recruitment of Shakespeare ('This royal throne . . .' stopping before it becomes critical of affairs), Chaucer and Shelley is something very like digging up corpses to rape them. The book is humourlessly and harmlessly collected. I can see little excuse for it. 'Forever Freedom' gave something like a sincere picture of the heritage we want to see sold, and although this book contains incidentally much of the best and best-known English verse, it holds nothing that is not already easily accessible. I would have felt less hostile if 'The Mask of Anarchy', 'We Plow and Sow', 'Song in Time of Order', and one or two more of the genuine voices, the exclusion of which misrepresents both English writing and the authors who are filletted, had been in it. One cannot sell a culture to the men of goodwill in another country. *But through people like Patchen one can learn that the mercenaries and charlatans haven't it all their own way.* If our work leaves that impression in America I think we will be able to dispense with Mr. Bronson. As Cummings said: 'A salesman is an It that stinks Excuse Me'. At any rate, the battle against War Writers' Boards, Heritages, and general prostitution is not going by default.

ALEX COMFORT

ROY MCFADDEN, *Swords and Ploughshares*; GEORGE WOODCOCK, *The Centre Cannot Hold;* NORMAN MCCAIG, *Far Cry;* D. S. SAVAGE, *A Time to Mourn* (Routledge New Poets 9, 10, 11 and 12); ROBERT PENN WARREN, *Eleven Poems on the Same Theme* (New Directions, U.S.A.).

The four new 2s. 6d. poets from Routledge are, all in all, the best in the series so far, though, alas! they are very far from perfect. Norman McCaig is an excitingly colourful poet, whose more recent verse in *Far Cry* has lost some of his earlier obscurity without losing much of its colour. D. S. Savage, George Woodcock, and Roy McFadden can at best be described as good anthology poets. Their poems are 'safe': they are sufficiently workmanlike to make pleasant reading, taken one by one, but alas! a whole bookful of each is—dare we say it?—a little dull. Mr. Savage, who is the most competent, is sunk in a perpetual and savage despondency. From this he rouses himself twice, in 'Galahad' and 'Life of Lord Alfred Tennyson', which are both rather remarkable poems, notwithstanding the fact that the former seems to bear an uncommon similarity to the style of John Crowe Ransom. For the rest of the time he appears to thrash about in dank ditches.

Mr. Woodcock writes about as well as Roy Fuller, but, unlike the latter, does not flaunt the advantage of a naval uniform and a New Writing pass-key: on the contrary, he is a nasty anarchist. However, his poetry is surprisingly respectable, almost, one might say, excessively respectable. Where he is not being too clever à la Auden, he can describe a pretty scene or touch off a situation to a T. However, he does not do this as well as Mr. Todd, nor, for that matter, as well as Mr. Auden (Sir-All-Man's-Enemy), Mr. MacNeice, or Mr. Ewart. So . . .

Mr. McFadden, the youngest of the three, knows his Yeats and knows his Ireland. He also knows his Comfort, and probably his England. At any rate, he tries to blend somewhat unsuccessfully the sweet singer and the hunted intellectual. Nevertheless, 'In Ireland Now,' and a few of the other poems, have a certain dignity. It is not perhaps too much to say that he promises well.

Significant fact: Mr. Savage is the only one of these who has, with one of his sour little poems, crept into 'Horizon'. *Curious fact:* Inside the jacket of Mr. Woodcock's creased little pamphlet it is remarked that 'This is the first collection of his poems to appear in book form'. Am I dreaming of a White Island?

Mr. Penn Warren, being older than these, should perhaps be treated with more respect: though some oldish men have produced some pretty funny stuff in their time. However, this is not difficult, as Mr. Warren is thoroughly adult in his performance: his eleven distinguished and elegantly-made poems are worth all the 129 in the other pamphlets. He is not perhaps a great poet, but his poems are instinct with that historical sense which Mr. Eliot considers necessary to an achievement in poetry. It is difficult to quote from his work with effect, for he is not a poet of single lines (and there are ample single lines of quotable merit in the other works with which I have been dealing), but I will risk the last stanza of 'Bearded Oaks'. Possibly it does not convey his quality: possibly it does:

> '*We live in time so little time*
> *And we learn all so painfully,*
> *That we may spare this hour's term*
> *To practice for eternity.*'

NICHOLAS MOORE

DENYS VAL BAKER, *Little Reviews* 1914–1943 (Allen & Unwin, 2s.)

It is difficult to see any reason for the production of this pamphlet at the present time when paper is rationed and could be used for better purposes. God knows that Mr. Baker makes no pretence at criticism of the Little Reviews which he mentions (for, as I will show, he can hardly be said to *deal* with them), and any attempt at evaluation seems to be quite outside his powers, so that it may appear to the casual reader that 'Opus' (a production of Mr. Baker's own, and the only one about which his facts are accurate) is of as great importance as the 'Little Review', say, or 'Transition', or the 'Criterion', or 'New Verse'.

However, since Mr. Baker sets himself up as an impartial historian, it would be as well to examine him in the light of the lime under which he disports. Unfortunately, the title of 'historian' is too heavy a millstone for his slender neck, and he seems to have sunk immobile to the ground, unable to go in search of the facts which he purports to deal out to his readers.

On his first page Mr. Baker shows his ignorance by stating of Margaret Anderson that she was a lady of 'adequate financial resources'—twenty minutes' reading of Miss Anderson's autobiography, 'My Thirty Years War', would have shown Mr. Baker that Miss Anderson's production of the 'Little Review' over a consider-

able number of years was due entirely to her genius in persuading printers and private individuals to back it—not to any unbottomed purse of her own.

Three pages later Mr. Baker passes quickly over 'Blast', curtails Wyndham Lewis's later periodical the 'Enemy' to two numbers, and demonstrates his ignorance of his subject by his omission of another important publication by Wyndham Lewis, which did indeed only run to two issues, the 'Tyro'.

Mr. Baker, polite to everyone—and over-polite to some, proceeds in his happy-go-lucky way across the years, giving magazines contributors whom they would not have accepted, their printers as publishers, and even gifts of editors whom they never knew.

Some of his errors might have been forgiven if Mr. Baker had made up his mind whether he wished to write an historical account of the little magazine since 1914, or to provide a picture of the conditions under which these magazines existed. He does neither. None of his accounts gives the dates on which the periodicals started or when they suspended publication, there is often no indication whether a paper was a quarterly, a monthly, bi-monthly, etc., and, as for Mr. Baker's description of the contents of the reviews, it seems as though he had never ventured beyond the lists on the cover or the contents page. For example, Mr. Baker gives among the contributors to *New Verse*, Julian Bell, John Lehmann, William Plomer, and Michael Roberts, none of whom appeared, except in the comic strip section: I am sure that both Geoffrey Grigson, the Editor, and Michael Roberts would be amused to learn that the latter was one of those who contributed the bulk of the critical material.

The little reviews, with all their excellences, faults and eccentricities, are an important manifestation of the social and economic conditions of our time and, as such, these deserve a serious consideration and evaluation which they have not received here. All that Mr. Baker has done is to provide an inaccurate and incomplete list with some ill-informed and immature comments.

RUTHVEN TODD

Ulster Voices: Autumn 1943.

The autumn issue of *Ulster Voices* is the third of this excellent series, and with its publication the success of the venture seems assured.

Seven poets are represented, of whom five are Ulster writers and two are English. All the poems should prove of real interest to readers in this country, but the poem 'One Whom I Knew', by Alex Comfort, stands far ahead of all the others, and is one of the finest short lyrics I have seen by this poet. In it Mr. Comfort prolongs those notes of pity and despair heard in his earlier volume, 'A Wreath for the Swing'. There is an unforgettable tenderness and poignancy throughout, but especially felt in the following lines:

> *'They wait for him*
> *where the sand meets the grass—and one unmarried holds*
> *her spine's long intricate necklace for his shoulders*
> *pillows his broken face. . . .'*

The other guest poet, John Atkins, is entirely Audenesque in his poem 'Interruption'. To a thorough suspicion of present-day values he unites a kind of bantering irony. This type of writing is very typical of the movement to which it belongs, but can hardly be called the immortal stuff of poetry.

Of the Ulster poets, Richard Rowley, who has two poems printed, is wholly traditional in form. Both poems are sonnets. The first is adapted from the French of Joachim du Bellay: the second is quite original. There is a certain roughness of texture about the first poem, but the second one is much smoother, and its conclusion is very memorable.

John Boyd, whose 'Murlough Bay 1942' appeared in the summer issue and gave evidence of considerable imagination and power, has only one short poem in this number. This lyric, 'Towards Donegall,' is much less ambitious than the former, but captures the mystery and romance of the Donegall hills very finely.

Of the three remaining poems the first, 'Twenty-Four,' by Eithne O'Connell, is a sensitive example of how suitably free-verse can be moulded to suit its subject when handled by an expert:

> *'The ugliness of people is not his overwhelming.*
> *He seems tided about by the exquisite loneliness*
> *of grey waves, under the wetness of mists*
> *wind-blown from shore-mountains.'*

The second poem, 'Wrestling with Every Passing Wind,' by Robert Greacen, reveals the extent to which the modern poet is haunted by the bitterness and despair of our times. Mood and expression unite to preserve his accurate quality:

> '*Each man's pain is petalled from the same broad stem,*
> *But each is separate and individual. . . .*'

The last poet, Roy McFadden, needs no introduction to English readers, and his 'Memory of a Town' is packed with memorable images and vital with beauty:

> '*Now on that well-known strand the sea*
> *Pushes long fingers, rendering smooth the brow*
> *Of tide-marked sand.*'

We may be glad that the favourable hopes expressed concerning this venture are well on the way to fulfilment.

ALEC SMITH

PETER YATES, *The Motionless Dancer* (Chatto & Windus, 5s. net).
FORRÉST REID, *Poems from the Greek Anthology* (Faber, 5s. net).

Mr. Peter Yates is a poet whose muse is very difficult to cage within the net of prose criticism. It is not that he is unduly obscure—though certain unrelated participles like 'loving' in the opening stanza of the first poem leave us wondering, and the esoteric adjective 'cerulean doors', 'helial airs', 'embolic walls' dislocates our mental progress through a closely knit poem. Nor is it that an occasional pomposity—'Illumination of nocturnal fairs', the 'aqueous coherence' of waves, or a love that is invited to 'incinerate' our 'icicle reserve' confuses our judgment of the whole. Such defects are tangible but small, and represent only a fractional percentage of the book. The critic's difficulty is rather to say what the poems are 'about'. For the most part the titles give no adequate clue, for the appeal is nearly always beyond the image given: this is not the poetry of statement. Yet it cannot properly be called 'symbolic', because the image itself has a direct as well as an allusive significance—as in the title poem on thoughts evoked by a statue. The problem is rather that which confronted the Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century: the difficulty of putting words to a complex experience which, because partly outside the bounds of consciousness, eludes definition. One

may roughly say that the experience which most of these poems try to convey is that of the organic unity of life—birth, maturity, death and regeneration as an endless cyclic rhythm—an unfettered natural growth and fertility transcending the philosophical pessimism inherent in the mechanised sterility of modern technics:

> '*Go where the sinister machine has been*
> *The dream; in germinal deep organs sow*
> *Your seed, need of man's spherical green cage*
> *Calamitous assuage: the severed roots*
> *Resilient still writhe.*
>
> *For living calls, talks April waterfalls,*
> *Snow-melting robe from shoulders slipping down*
> *Brown gullies into seas . . .*'

—the last three among the loveliest lines in the book. 'The Impure Rose', from which they are taken, that finished and significant metrical achievement, 'The Germinal Bone', 'Now Thinking Hands Inscribe the Word', and 'Proud Scholar of Decisive Will' all ably illustrate this organic conception of life.

In other poems another thesis is also implicit: the infusion of mind into matter, the evocation of myth, of the truth behind the symbol without—as was the tendency among the Romantics —belittling the objective reality of the material symbol itself. This quality is even more difficult of conveyance in brief quotation: a hint of it is seen in 'Landscape':

> '*Dark elements and changing sky*
> *Absorb the vision seeking form,*
> *Till viaducts and liquid ways*
> *Transmit their energy to thought . . .*
>
> *Revealing through the carnal robe*
> *The spirit's hunger in its flesh . . .*'

All life is part of one Life, organic and endless, and any philosophy or creed, such as the machine-worship of Dialectical Materialism, that exalts any one part at the expense of inhibiting any other is a denial of the essence of creative life itself, and of the essential dignity and significance of human existence. That is what Mr. Yates's muse seems to tell me; but she is, as I said, a very elusive young lady—and when you try to pin her down too tightly she starts to wriggle!

A short selection—here made from forty known and a dozen anonymous poets—out of the vast bulk of 'The Greek Anthology' cannot hope to be representative of anything but the selector's personal taste; and this Mr. Forrest Reid concedes. When as here, too, the renderings are in prose, there can be no cunning attempt to transliterate the cadences of Greek metre or vowel music. In a word, the appeal must lie in their ability to convey to us some of the interests of the Greeks in the thousand years covered by the 'Anthology'; and, more subtly, the spirit which infused Greek life, thought, and culture, and which composed what Lowes Dickinson called 'The Greek View of Life'. The first requirement is easy of fulfilment; the second at once the inspiration and despair of successive translators. And, especially as he professes no Classical equipment—'these versions were hammered out with the aid of cribs'—Mr. Reid's achievement is considerable. It is, therefore, perhaps carping to challenge his rendering of 'Ὦ ξεῖνʼ' (from Simonides' Epitaph for the Spartans at Thermopylæ) merely as 'Stranger'. No Spartan survived; no stranger was present; and the dead speak only to whomsoever shall chance that way, bidding him take back the proud boast of their achievement: 'Passer-by' is surely the better word and, to English ears, heightens the pathos of those moving lines.

Such criticisms, however, are trifling and few in number, and the Greek spirit shines forth in the prose renderings of many of these short lyrics—shines forth the better, perhaps, for their being in prose and avoiding the diffuseness of much verse translation, excellent and mellifluous poetry in itself, but lacking kinship with the original—*cf.* some of the work of Professor Gilbert Murray. And these versions not only bring out some of the essential features of the Greek, but stress, whether unconsciously or by reason of the special selection, those qualities which are at once furthest removed from, and most wistfully desired of, our own speed-crazed and war-wracked generations. First, there is a fresh, unsophisticated delight in the very smallest of natural things—the chirrup of a grasshopper or the breath of the west wind: it is a nature poetry that avoids equally the conventionalizing of our own 'Augustans' and the romantic excesses of the nineteenth century Pantheists. Then there is the treatment of the body, its faculties and passions. Christianity urges the negative virtue of preservation of the body from evil doing as it is the temple of the Holy Ghost; the Greeks exalt, beautify, and rejoice in positive physical perfection and physical love: the body is the house of the spirit, love its manifestation. The statues of Chartres bear witness to a sense of sin; the

Caryatids of the Erechtheum to a sunlit innocence; with them there is no inhibition, and because there is no inhibition again there is no excess.

That brings us to the question of Greek religion—the relationship of man to the gods. To them the gods were fellow beings incidentally endowed with immortality: they were honoured for the gifts they gave to man, placated for the woes they could bring, and their aid sought in ventures great and small. But if we only understand *that* we are far from the religion of Greece. There was an easy familiarity between man and the gods—a 'shocking' flippancy about the gods' actions at times, as any reader of W. H. D. Rouse's translation of the *Iliad* will appreciate—and if their gods were anthropomorphic there was something semi-divine about the Greeks' conception of their heroes and great men. The doctrine of the Incarnation, and the Roman deification of their emperors, would present no difficulties to the mind of classical Greece: their gods were not solely divine, their men and women not merely physical animals; bodily death itself was no cause for excessive grief, as the many restrained and lovely epitaphs in this book show. In fact, the point I have sought to make is, that in their poetry (and their sculpture), in their human relationships and emotions, in their religious and spiritual life, the Greeks chose, as no people before or since has chosen, the golden mean between convention and excess. Yet 'chose' is itself too deliberate a word: at their best they achieved by instinct that balanced development of body, mind and spirit that has been the envy and despair of succeeding ages, and of no time more than our own. In the gentle grace of a Leonidas or a Theokritos, in the sense of human brotherhood of a Maleagar ('Stranger, we are all of one country, the earth,'), in the joyous love-delights of an Asklepiades, this selection bears witness to that gracious spirit of human freedom from external or interior bondage wherein lies the essence of the glory that was Greece.

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POETRY Quarterly

VOL. 6
1944